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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

The language laboratory is essentially an audiovisual aid which not only stores information, but allows the student to control the rate of presentation, continually evaluates the student's performance, and appraises his achievement.

The effective performance of a teaching machine depends heavily on the organization of material stored in it, which in turn depends on the skill of the teacher who does the programing. The machine mechanically stores, distributes, and corrects the course material; but it is the teacher who provides the material.

Foreign language material used in laboratory tapes should be recorded by a native speaker, thereby giving the student a perfect model to imitate. When pronunciation is being taught, the learning cycle should be composed of the reading by a native speaker in the foreign language, the student's imitation, and the evaluation of the student's imitation. In the teaching of grammatical structure, the learning cycle should be composed of the reading of material, the questions on material, the student's answer, and the verification or denial.

To properly prepare material for the language laboratory, the instructor is urged to become acquainted with the principles of modern linguistics and to realize that the exercises in most textbooks generally prove unsuitable for the laboratory. The general practice of today is to make one of the five language classes each week a laboratory class, with compulsory laboratory attendance. Occassional breaks during the laboratory class are desirable. Recorded lessons can be designed for a full period or for half period, allowing time for a complete repeat or teacher comment. Sample lessons for each are included.

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HOW TO USE A LANGUAGE LABORATORY

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How To Use the Lang-Lab

While the language laboratory has been a-building, no doubt it became habitual on campus to ask members of the Language Department staff, "How's your laboratory coming along?" Now that the engineers have finished testing circuits, and members of the installation crew have departed, staff members will probably be quick to reply, "Why, it's finished." Natural as this reply would be, the fact is it would be far from true. Far from being finished, the laboratory is actually just beginning.

The language laboratory is, among other things, a "teaching machine". (Before you recoil in abhorrence from this concept, let it be pointed out that the "flash cards" popular with many teachers for some years now are also a teaching machine.) Such a device, as an excellent recent study points out, is essentially nothing more than an audiovisual aid which does more than merely store information (like a textbook), but aims "at the interaction of the learner's behavior with the subject-matter;"[1] that is to say, it allows the student to control the rate of presentation, continually evaluates his performance, and appraises his achievement.

The effective performance of a "teaching machine" depends heavily on the organization of the material stored in it, which is called "programming" and in turn depends, of course, on the skill of the teacher who does the "programming." In other words, the machine mechanically stores, distributes, and corrects the course material; but the teacher must still provide it. You will find this to be true of your language laboratory; the machines will do everything they are designed to do, but

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[1] D. A. Cook, "Programmed Learning: A Revolution in Instruction" Columbia University Graduate Faculties Newsletter, November, 1960, p. 1-3
See also, Lumsdaine, A. L., and Glasser, Robert, Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning, Washington National Education Assn. 1960, 124 pp; $7.50.

the effectiveness of the laboratory will be proportional to the programs you design for it. And you will have to do the designing, for you may assume that the textbooks you are using will not have been written with the language laboratory in mind.

The first important thing about the laboratory is that, with it, you can give the student a perfect model to imitate. This is basic; it is the least the laboratory can do.

It is believed that no one learns to speak a language (even his native one) exactly like those from whom he learned it. Among native speakers this slight deviation results in the gradual change of the language. But, when a non-native speaker acquires a language, the deviation is probably greater and in a different direction. It is very rare for even a proficient linquist to acquire another language without at least a trace of foreign accent, no matter how fluently he speaks it. His students will, naturally, not come as close as he did; and if they become teachers, their students may speak something that is neither French nor English--something nobody understands but themselves, like the English of the children in Kipling's story.[2]

Hence, you should always see to it that the foreign-language material used in your laboratory tapes has been recorded by a native speaker, (naturally, one who speaks with the accent and usage of a cultivated person). In the case of Latin, we must admit, it would prove difficult to revive Cicero or Caesar, but we recommend a native speaker of Italian, a language which is still perhaps 70% Latin.

Now, the full cycle of mechanized learning is a four-stage one: (1) presentation of material, (2) question, (3) student's answer (4) appraisal.[3] As applied to the

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[2] R. Kipling, "Namgay Doola."

[3] Cook, op. cit., p. 2.

language laboratory, it would be (when pronunciation is being taught): (1) reading by a native speaker in the foreign language; (2) student's imitation; (3) evaluation of student's imitation.

In what is called the "listening laboratory," the third stage is supposed to consist in the student's hearing himself in his ear-phones simultaneously with his imitation--plus whatever comments the teacher may make. In the "recording lab," original and imitation are recorded, and the evaluation consists of playing this back to the student--with the playback either under the student's control (if there is a recording machine in each booth,) or at a uniform rate from the console.

When grammatical structure is being taught, the cycle will be four-phased: (1) reading of material; (2) question on material, (3) student's answer, (4) verification or denial. Here, conveyance of the structure to be taught depends on how the material is organized. In the lab, we do not state a principle; we present examples of the operation of the principle, and repeat examples until the student (subconsciously) appreciates the principle.

Thus, we may (1) present a grammatical pattern which the student is supposed to use, (2) direct him to use the pattern with different words, (3) give the correct answer, and (4) have him record whether his answer was or was not identical with the correct one. Or, No. 2 can be a true-false, yes-no, or multiple choice question designed to determine whether or not the student understood the statement made or the question asked. This type of exercise is very easy to correct--often the job can be given to more advanced students, or students of a different class--and this weekly quiz proves extremely effective in keeping the student on his toes and making his laboratory session profitable.

As a background for your programming of the material for the language laboratory, you will find it desirable to become acquainted in at least a general way with the principles of modern linguistics. The exercises given in most text-books will generally prove unsuitable for the laboratory, and, if used, boring to the student and ineffective. Laboratories were invented by linguists,[4] and the most successful ones are those in which the programs are designed by linguists. From linguistics you will learn new approaches to grammatical phenomena which will enable you to design better programs.

There is, as yet, no general agreement on most of the basic questions about the use of the language laboratory, nor on the degree of effectiveness of different methods. It is beginning to be general practice to make one of the five language classes each week a lab. class, and, of course, to make attendance at the lab. class compulsory.[5] It is generally felt that occasional breaks during the lab. class are desirable, and some prefer to design the recorded lesson for half the period (20 or 25 minutes), allowing time for a complete repeat, or for the teacher to comment on performance. We shall close by presenting two possible formulas for the laboratory lesson--one, a full-period lesson, the other, a half-period one.

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[4] J. P. Hughes. "The Machine Age in Language Teaching", Catholic School Journal, September, 1958.

[5] T. F. Regan, "Scheduling High School Lab. Periods" Bay State Bulletin, Vol VI (November, 1960), pp. 3-5.

Laboratory Lesson B

15 minutes:	1. Reading by native speaker, from textbook lesson.
3 minutes:	2. Break.
7 minutes:	3. Quiz on reading; yes-no or true-false questions.
25 minutes:	The whole tape is then repeated, and the student is allowed to improve his answers on Part 3 (with which in mind, he listens more attentively to Part 1.).